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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001522

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/31/2015

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KAWC](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PINR](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE FOR CERTAIN  
DETAINEES FROM GUANTANAMO: SRI LANKA

REF: STATE 158272

Classified By: Charge' d'Affaires, a.i. James F. Entwistle for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Charge' raised reftel situation of Uighur  
Guantanamo detainees with Foreign Ministry  
Secretary H.G.M.S. Palihakkara August 31 and asked

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for Sri Lankan assistance. Palihakkara replied  
that "we'd like to do it," but that accepting the  
Uighurs would "create problems with our Chinese  
friends" and lead to pressure from Beijing "that  
we probably couldn't withstand." The Secretary  
underlined that improving relations with Beijing  
is a high Sri Lankan foreign policy priority, as  
illustrated by the fact that President Kumaratunga  
is in China this week with a large commercial  
delegation.

[1](#)2. (C) Comment/Assessment: Sri Lanka is indeed  
doing all it can to improve ties with Beijing at  
present. A number of local commentators focused  
on the fact that President Kumaratunga went  
forward with her long-scheduled trip to Beijing  
despite the unsettled domestic situation here in  
the wake of the announcement of Presidential  
elections and the August 12 assassination of the  
Foreign Minister. Beyond the desire for improved  
political and commercial ties with China, Sri  
Lanka is faced with a large internally displaced  
population of its own, both from the years of war  
and last December's tsunami. While Sri Lanka  
usually tries to be helpful on issues of  
importance to Washington, we unfortunately see  
nothing to be gained by raising the Uighur issue  
here again.  
ENTWISTLE